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Mr. Speaker, we are facing a storm of controversy surrounding public broadcasting. There are ominous signs of interference and people concerned about trying to impose their political agenda on our independent public broadcasting system.

We have seen Draconian and unjustified proposals coming from the Committee on Appropriations to slash funding for the next year and eliminate Federal support altogether in the future.

In 2001, we formed the Public Broadcasting Caucus in Congress precisely for the reason to enable us to come together in a bipartisan way to deal with the controversial and complex issues surrounding public broadcasting. This would be a great time for Members who have not yet joined to become members to enable their staff to take advantage of opportunity and information and, frankly, in a small way, to show some measure of support.

I look forward to the debate later this week during the Labor-HHS appropriations bill not just to restore critical funding. My hope is that as a result of this controversy, we will emerge with a better understanding of why we support the public broadcasting. I hope we are doing so in a way that provides the continuity and stability so essential to the critical service enjoyed by 28 million listeners each month and the 70 percent of television owners who watch public television.